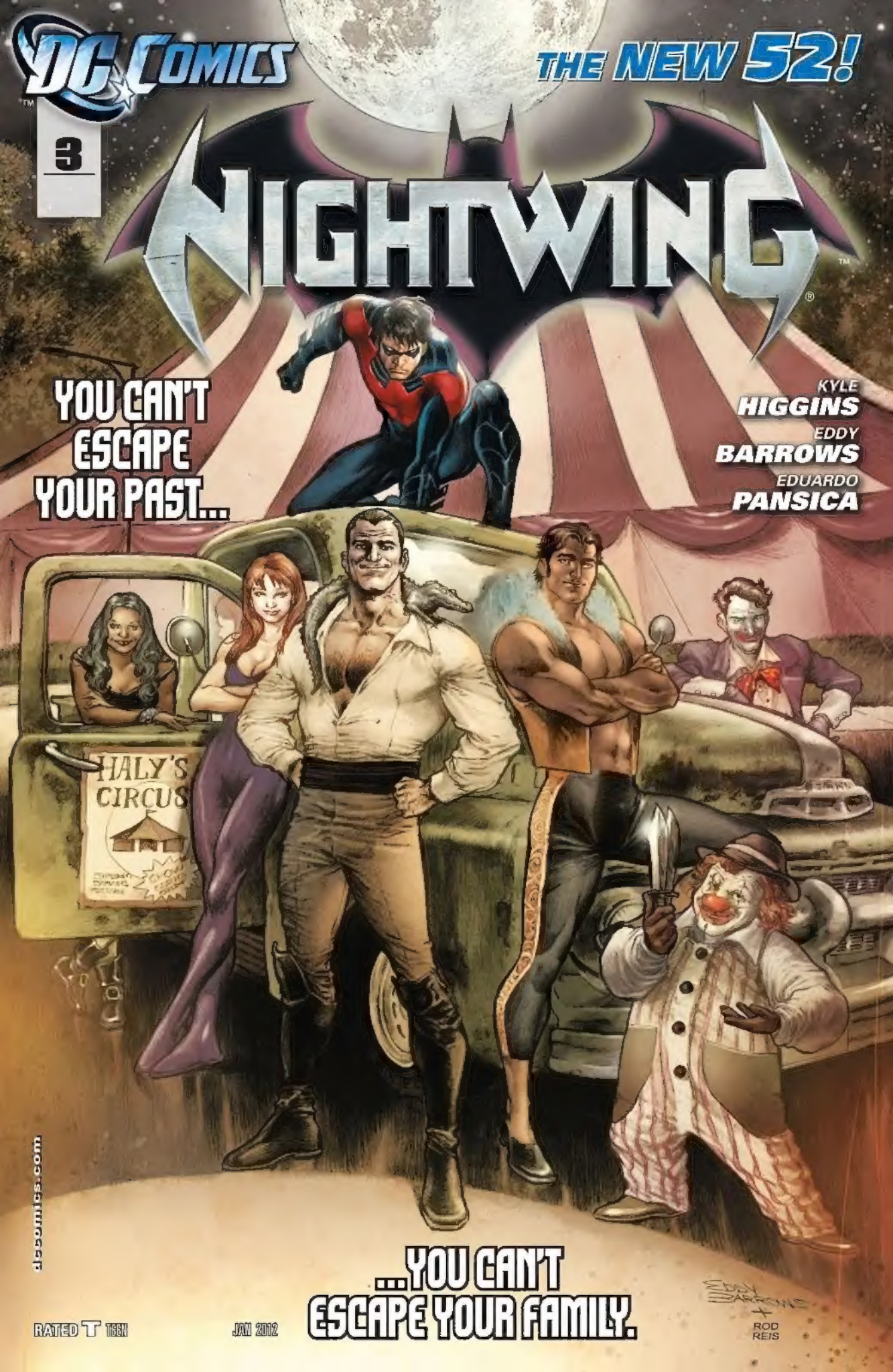

DC COMICS
THE NEW 52!
3
NIGHTWING
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE YOUR PAST...
KYLE HIGGINS
EDDY BARROWS
EDUARDO PANSICA
HALY'S CIRCUS
...YOU CAN'T ESCAPE YOUR FAMILY.
ROD REIS
dccomics.com
RATED T TEEN
JAN 2012

A CORNFIELD IN IOWA, FIVE YEARS AGO
WHAT, YOU DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT?
I THINK YOU'RE STUPID IF YOU TRY, RAYMOND.
WOW...
FINE THEN--HIT ME, GRAYSON.
YOU SURE?
GO FOR IT!
HA! RIGHT? RIGHT?!
WHOOPS!
UGH!
HA HA HA!
THE HELL, ZANE?!
HA HA HA!
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A TACKLE...

OH-- MR. HALY? WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?
WELL, I'M AFRAID I'VE GOT SOME BAD NEWS, GUYS... AFTER THE SHOW WE JUST DID, I CAN'T LET YOU HANG OUT BY THE FIRE TONIGHT.
WHAT? WHY?
BECAUSE I ALREADY TOLD YOUR PARENTS YOU HAD EXTRA CHORES...
AND THEN MR. HALY SLIPPED ME HIS TRUCK KEYS.
WELL, ZANE'S PERSUASIVE.
REALLY??
WHOA.
SO I'M THINKING A MIDNIGHT MOVIE-- FIRST ONE TO THE TRUCK RIDES SHOTGUN.
ON IT!
OH COME ON, RAYMOND, YOU GOT A HEAD START!
THAT'S TOTALLY NOT FAIR...
HOLD ON A SECOND, DICK...
YOU KNOW SHE COULD OUTRUN 'EM BOTH IF SHE WANTED TO, RIGHT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN MAYBE SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SIT IN FRONT... SINCE SHE ALREADY KNOWS WHO'S GONNA BE LAST TO THE TRUCK.
YOU CATCH MY DRIFT?
HEY, YOU KNOW I'M ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR YOU, KIDDO...
It's funny how it's the little things you remember about a person.
A smile, a few kind words, the way they made you feel at a certain moment.
Right now I'm trying to remember Mr. Haly as the "fun uncle" I grew up with...

...and not the one I'll never see again.
This all started when someone hired a murderer named Saiko to come after me, because of a secret that paints me, Dick Grayson, as the "fiercest killer in all of Gotham."*
*SEE ISSUE #1 --BOBBIE
It's a secret I know nothing about, but one that Mr. Haly died to protect.
A secret with an answer...

...in the "heart of the circus."
I told the police that I found Mr. Haly nearly dead, outside the warehouse, after he'd gotten away from Saiko.
ATLANTIC CITY
PAST AND PRESENT
KYLE HIGGINS - WRITER
EDDY BARROWS & EDUARDO PANSICA - PENCILS
JP MAYER, PAULO SIQUEIRA & EBER FERREIRA - INKS
ROD REIS & ALLEN PASSALAQUA - COLORS
CARLOS M. MANGUAL - LETTERS
BARROWS & REIS - COVER
KATIE HUBERT - ASSISTANT EDITOR
BOBBIE CHASE - EDITOR
NIGHTWING CREATED BY MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ
After witnessing the deaths of his parents as a boy, Dick Grayson was taken under Batman's wing, becoming Robin, the Boy Wonder. But when the Boy Wonder became a man, he shed the identity of Robin and branded himself as...
NIGHTWING

Raya took me there... with everything going on, we've barely been able to talk.
Especially not about us.

Mr. Haly died and I'm a target because of a mystery I know nothing about.
A mystery involving the circus.

BITTER OLD MAN...

HE WAS MURDERED?
THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE SAYIN'...
GRAYSON WAS THE LAST TO SEE HIM ALIVE...

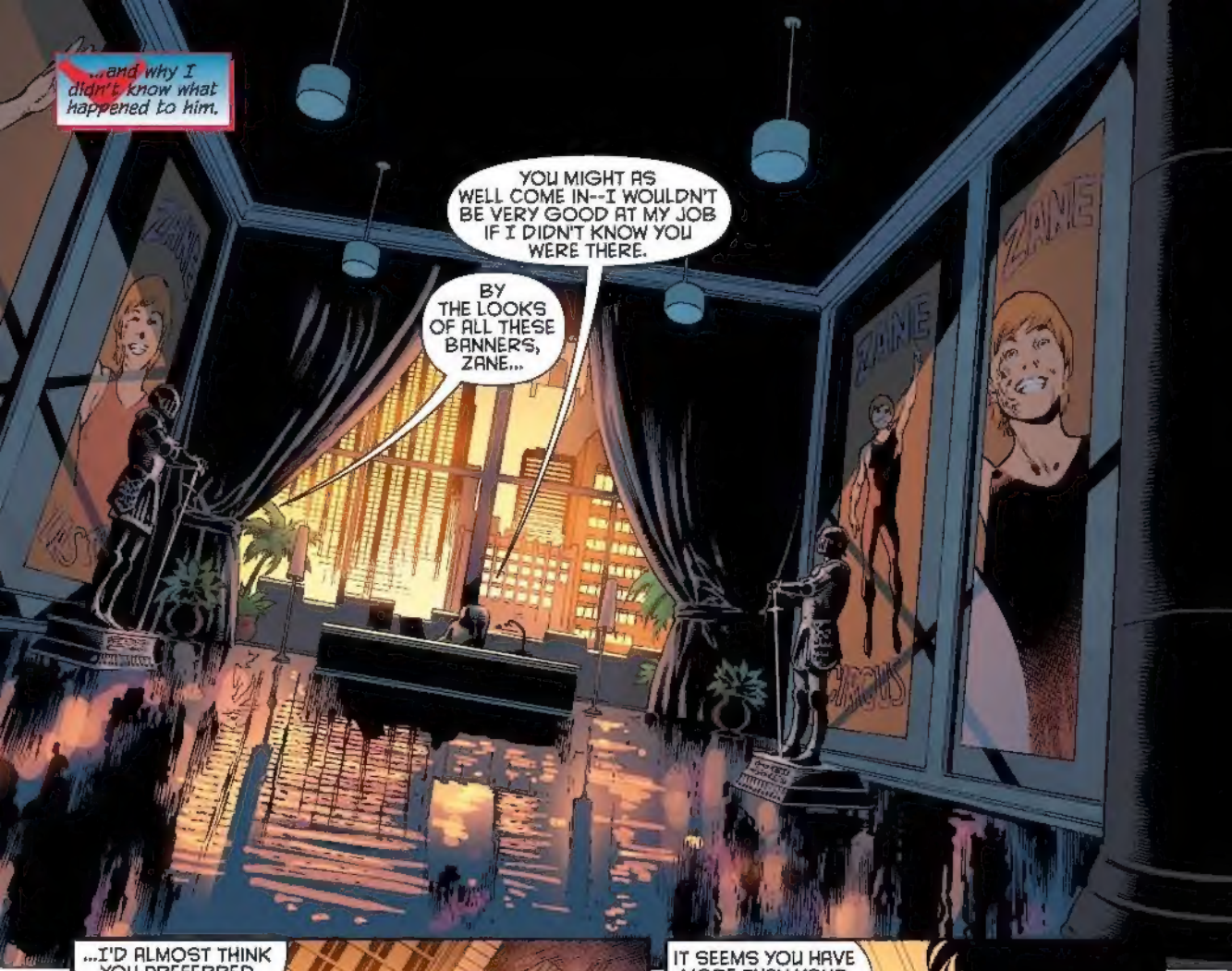
THE HELL... YOU THINK YOU'RE DOIN' HERE?

YOU GOT SOME *NERVE*, GRAYSON!
BRYAN...
COME ON--CALM DOWN, BRYAN.
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST...
...JUST STROLL IN HERE AND TAKE IT? LIKE THE CIRCUS IS *YOURS* JUST 'CAUSE HE GAVE YOU A PIECE OF PAPER?!
NO, THAT'S...
I'M NOT TAKING *ANYTHING*, BRYAN.
COME ON, BRYAN--YOU'RE *DRUNK*...
DAMN *RIGHT* YOU'RE NOT TAKING ANYTHING!
WELL I GOT NEWS FOR YA, GRAYSON--MY DAD'S *GONE*, AND HE'S *NOT* GONNA BE AROUND TO HELP YOU ANYMORE! HE'S *DEAD*...YOU HEAR ME?!
HE'S...
...HE'S... REALLY... HE'S REALLY DEAD...
"DO THE POLICE HAVE ANY LEADS YET?"

GOTHAM CITY. LATER.
I TOLD THEM THE NAME MR. HALY GAVE ME...AND THAT "SAIKO" IS JAPANESE FOR "BEST."
BUT CONTRACT KILLERS AREN'T EXACTLY ATLANTIC CITY'S FORTE.
WELL... THEY'RE NOT TALKING TO THE RIGHT PERSON.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN... THEY SHOULD REALLY BE TALKING TO ZANE.
OUR ZANE? WHY?
BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HE DOES NOW... OR AT LEAST, THOSE ARE THE RUMORS. HE GETS PEOPLE LIKE THIS "SAIKO" WORK... LIKE A BOOKING AGENT.
HE'S ONE OF THE BIGGEST IN CHICAGO.
...WHAT?
AFTER YOUR PARENTS DIED, EVERYTHING STARTED TO FALL APART.
AND THEN WHEN RAYMOND DIED... WELL, THAT'S WHEN THINGS HIT ROCK BOTTOM--ESPECIALLY FOR ZANE.
HE RAN AWAY, STARTED A NEW LIFE...LIKE WE ALL ENDED UP DOING. BUT HIS...HIS WAS DARKER.
I...HAD NO IDEA...
WELL, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY GREAT ABOUT STAYING IN TOUCH...
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
IT MEANS YOU STAY AHEAD OF THE THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO DEAL WITH...
INCLUDING PEOPLE. HECK, IT'S PROBABLY WHY YOU'RE SO GOOD AT THE TRAPEZE.
YOU LOOK FORWARD INSTEAD OF BACK, DICK. IT'S WHO YOU ARE.
YOU REALLY THINK THAT?
HEY, YOU'RE THE GUY WHO DIDN'T EVEN COME BACK FOR RAYMOND'S FUNERAL.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
After everyone makes it back from the funeral, and the ring crew breaks down the tent... it's on to Philadelphia.
But not for me.

It doesn't take much digging to find Zane.
Raya was right.
He's been flagged by half a dozen government agencies... always on the "fringes" of jobs--murder, assassinations...
...never close enough to have any "real" connection, but not far enough away to keep from being noticed.
And yet with all the questions I have about Saiko and Mr. Haly, the one that's rattling me the most right now has nothing to do with either of them.
It's about my friend Zane...


...and why I didn't know what happened to him.
YOU MIGHT AS WELL COME IN--I WOULDN'T BE VERY GOOD AT MY JOB IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE THERE.
BY THE LOOKS OF ALL THESE BANNERS, ZANE...
ZANE
ZANE

...I'D ALMOST THINK YOU PREFERRED YOUR *OLD* JOB.
EXCEPT FOR THE PART ABOUT AN ASSASSIN *MURDERING* C.C. HALY, AND YOU SITTING HERE WAIST DEEP IN CONTRACT KILLERS.
AWFULLY *CONVENIENT*, IF YOU ASK ME.

IT SEEMS YOU HAVE MORE THAN YOUR CITIES MIXED UP... NIGHTWING, IS IT?
COME ON, ZANE--THE SIZE OF THIS OFFICE? YOU'RE CLEARLY GOOD AT YOUR JOB--THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE THIS SLOPPY.

BUT I'M WILLING TO BET YOU KNOW WHO *IS*.
TELL ME WHO CONTRACTED THE HIT AND I WON'T RELOCATE TO CHICAGO AND MAKE YOU MY NEW HOBBY.
YOU KNOW, WE LIVE IN A WORLD SO FOCUSED ON "WHERE WE'RE GOING" THAT TOO OFTEN WE FORGET WHERE WE'VE STARTED.

IT'S WHY I KEEP THE BANNERS HERE--AS A CONSTANT REMINDER.
HOWEVER, THERE'S ANOTHER PERIOD OF MY LIFE THAT I RARELY GET TO PAY TRIBUTE TO ANYMORE. EXCEPT, OF COURSE, WHEN SOMEONE COMES INTO MY OFFICE AND TRIES TO THREATEN ME.

ARHHHH!
NOOOOO!
Incompetent
Failure
Worthless
Loser

--Brain--
--Move--
--Searing--
--Move--
--Hot--
YOU DON'T GET OTHER KILLERS WORK WITHOUT PUTTING IN WORK YOURSELF-- LEARNING SOME TRICKS.
GETTING SOME UPGRADES.
--Move!!
THEY USED TO CALL ME FEEDBACK FOR A REASON.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
What...what is he...
ALL THE ONES YOU LET DOWN...
ALL THE ONES YOU COULDN'T SAVE...

MOM... DAD...?
YOU LET US DIE, DICK...
Focus...focus. They're not real... Zane's just--
...WILL YOU LET US DIE AGAIN?
NO!!!
NOOOO!!!

--WORTHLESS--
--A JOKE--
--FLUNKEY--
--INCOMPETENT--
--FAILURE--
NO...
No. None of this... is happening...
Fake...they're all fake...
Search. Find something...
...something that feels real...
--USELESS--
...something that happened...

KRAK
ARGH!
Back on the roof. Less hallucinations...head clearer...it's a start.
Now if I could just figure out... how he's doing this.
HRRN!
KRKK
COME ONNN... I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF GOTHAM'S FINEST!
Think, Grayson. He said he had "upgrades."
Which means, unless he somehow managed to become a psychic...
...it's gotta be radio based.
Bingo.
ALERT!
SPIKE IN MICROWAVE AND RF BANDS
Oh, man--he's literally... transmitting. There's a high concentration in specific frequencies...to trigger specific emotions?
All right--so let's see what happens when my suit's comm transmitter--

--inverts the signals?
SH-NZZTTT!!
ARGHHH!!
Feedback.
THAT'S... =HRRN= A NEAT TRICK YOU'VE GOT THERE.
H-HURTS... IT HURTS...
TELL ME WHO HIRED SAIKO... AND MY SECOND CALL WILL BE TO A DOCTOR.
D-DON'T...
...DON'T... KNOW... WHO...

AND I'M SUPPOSED TO JUST *BELIEVE* YOU BECAUSE...?
BECAUSE...*NNG*...IF I *KNEW*...I WOULD *KILL* THEM.
LISTEN TO ME VERY CAREFULLY, ZANE...I'M ONLY GOING TO WARN YOU ONCE. STAY FAR AWAY FROM THIS.
TAKE MY ADVICE--FIND A NEW CAREER...
...'CAUSE THIS ONE CLEARLY DOESN'T *AGREE* WITH YOU.

ON THE CIRCUS TRAIN. OUTSIDE PHILADELPHIA
KNOCK KNOCK
HEY...
HEY, RAYA. SO THERE'S SOMETHING... SOMETHING I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT. ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID BEFORE.
OKAY...
YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU KNOW. ABOUT ME ALWAYS LOOKING FORWARD AND NEVER LOOKING BACK... ABOUT NOT DEALING WITH THE PAST.
BUT SEE, HERE'S THE THING, RAYA--THE NIGHT OF RAYMOND'S FUNERAL... I WAS THERE.
I'VE NEVER TOLD ANYONE THIS BEFORE...BUT I SNUCK OUT THAT NIGHT--AWAY FROM BRUCE, AWAY FROM THE MANOR...
...AND I TOOK TWO BUSES TO GET THERE, TO BE WITH YOU ALL. EXCEPT...THEN I SAW YOU.
YOU WERE STANDING IN FRONT OF HIS CLOSED CASKET, CRYING...IT WAS THE SAME LOOK YOU HAD THE LAST TIME WE SAW EACH OTHER, AT MY PARENTS' SERVICE.
THE SAME LOOK WHEN I SAID GOODBYE TO YOU. AND I...I COULDN'T DO IT AGAIN, RAYA...I COULDN'T SAY GOODBYE AGAIN.
SO I RAN.
BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW--I'M NOT RUNNING THIS TIME...I'M STAYING RIGHT HERE. MR. HALY LEFT ME THE CIRCUS, AND WANTED ME HERE...HE WANTED ME WITH ALL OF YOU.
AND UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT WHO DID THIS TO HIM... THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE I'M GOING TO BE.
YOU SURE YOU MEAN "RIGHT" HERE?
HEY--
"IT'S NOT FAIR, YOU KNOW."

YOUR PAST IS SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR PAST...YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO COME *BACK* TO IT. THIS...THIS IS ALL HIS FAULT. MY FATHER...AND THE CIRCUS...
CIRCUS
...DICK WAS *NEVER* SUPPOSED TO BE A PART OF THIS...
...YOU'RE STILL GOING TO *KILL* HIM?
WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT...

...THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M GOING TO DO.
NEXT ISSUE:
BATGIRL

KYLE HIGGINS
JOE BENNETT
DEATH STROKE
DC COMICS
THE NEW 52
MONTHLY
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